

Grant Continuation Report from Task Force

Recommendation: Forward with recommendation to award funding and AmeriCorps member slots requested.

Legal Applicant: Learning Works

Program Name: Aim High AmeriCorps

Category: ☐ AC Formula
☒ AC Competitive
☐ Other Competition

Type: ☐ Planning
☒ Operating
☐ Fixed Price
☐ Ed Award Only

Year in Grant Cycle: ☐ Year 1 ☒ Year 2 ☐ Year 3

Continuation Dates: 9/1/2020 to 8/31/2021

New Resources Requested for Continuation: Funds and Slots

	CNCS	Local Share	% change from 2019 year					
Operating	166,299	248,714	↓01%					
Member Support	102,564	88,000	↑ 01%					
Indirect (Admin)	14,142	56,078	↓01%					
% sharing proposed	42%	58%						
% share required	45%	55%						
Cost-per-member proposed (max allowed)	\$14,200							
Total AmeriCorps Member Service Years:		Slot Types Requested						
		1700	1200	900	675	450	300	Total
Slots With living allowance		4		20				24
Slots with only ed award							28	28

Program Description (executive summary from grant application):

LearningWorks proposes to place 52 AmeriCorps members who will provide 1:1 and small group tutoring for low-performing and economically disadvantaged elementary school students in four schools in Portland and Westbrook, ME. Members will serve 380 low-performing students; of these, 320 will improve their academic performance in reading and/or math and 320 will increase their positive behavioral and/or emotional engagement in school. Members will also leverage 50 community volunteers who will provide students with additional academic and social-emotional support. This program will concentrate on the CNCS focus area of Education - K-12 Success. The CNCS investment of \$286,338 will be matched with \$390,746, including \$56,000 in public funding and \$80,202 in private funding.

Service locations for the 2019-2020 year (no change in sites proposed):

- East End Community School
- Howard C Reiche Community School
- Riverton School
- Saccarappa School

NOTE! All performance assessment that follows is based on the final year (2018-2019) of a prior 3-year grant. The first quarter report (Oct-Dec) for the new grant is not due until Jan 2020. Thus, there is no performance data for the *new program model* funded for Sept 2019 through August 2022. The assessment data (past performance) below does reinforce as positive the program's decision to alter the model so as to hit targets including enrollment.

Performance measures:

AmeriCorps members generated 101 episodic and ongoing volunteers and they had two veterans serve in their program. The performance measures demonstrate their success in meeting their targets with current measures.

	2018-19 Target	2018-19 Actual	2019-20 Target	2020-21 Target
Increased Academic Performance:				
• # of students who start in a CNCS supported education program	300	370		
• # of students that completed participation in CNCS supported program	240	340		
• # of students with improved academic performance in literacy/and or math	228	255		
Member Development				
• # of completed and approved member development plans	42	29		
• # of individual members with improved skills, knowledge, and abilities used to carry out service assignment responsibilities and tasks	30	28		
Expanding Service through Increased Volunteer Involvement				
• Schools to develop plans to increase the # of effective management practices in use	5	5		
• Schools increase the # and quality of essential management practices implemented	5	5		
Improved Academic Engagement (behaviors)				
• # of Youth/Mentor Matches Started	100	40		
• # of Students with Improved Academic Engagement (behaviors)	85	40		
			New Grant	
Increased Academic Performance:				
• Edu: #of individuals (student) served			380	380
• Edu: # of students with improved academic performance			320	320
• ED27C: # of students with improved academic engagement or social-emotional skills			320	320
Member Development ¹				
• # of AmeriCorps program training and other formal development activities that result in increased AmeriCorps member skills, knowledge, and abilities related to the service assignment			TBD	TBD
• # of AmeriCorps members demonstrating increased competency in skills or application of knowledge.			TBD	TBD
Capacity-building ¹				
• # of community volunteers <i>recruited</i> by AmeriCorps members or program			TBD	TBD
• Hours of service contributed by community volunteers who were <i>recruited</i> by AmeriCorps members or program			TBD	TBD
• # of additional direct service activities and/or units completed for organizations by volunteers recruited/managed by AmeriCorps members			TBD	TBD

¹CNCS does not allow programs to enter these performance measures in federal application system. Targets set after award but before first report.

Operating performance summary:

Enrollment/retention.

- **Enrollment:** Has been very low for the 300-hour positions, the members in these positions do not receive a stipend; there were 53 slots for these positions, and they filled 14 (26.4%). For 1700-hour positions they filled their 6 slots (100%), for the 900-hour position they filled 29 out of 36 slots (80.6%) and for the 450-hours they filled all 4 of their slots (100%). For the last 3 slot types the members do receive a stipend. They are currently seeking less of the 300 (28 slots) and 900 (20 slots) hour positions they had.
- **Recruitment:** There is a significant challenge for recruiting the 300-hour positions without a stipend and there are many slots. The program staff do take every opportunity to get out and recruit by going to job fairs and other similar events with the intention of recruiting.
- **Retention:** Their retention rate has been decent overall. For the 1700-hour positions the retention rate was 100%, everyone exited with an award. For the 300-hour positions 4 exited early (retention 71.4%); for the 900-hour positions 10 exited early (retention 65.5%); and for the 450-hour positions only one exited without an award (retention 75%)

The decrease in MSY in their new grant cycle will enable them in achieving their goals of successful management of AmeriCorps members, and will address where they have experienced challenges in these areas, especially enrollment.

Compliance:

Overall the program operation is successful, and the program staff are responsive and thorough with documentation requests. Communication continues to be prompt and site visits were informative, yielding very minimal corrective action. One example of a corrective action was regarding citizenship verification documentation, which was expediently remedied.

» Member management

Members management is focused and proactive; however the performance targets for member development (training and professional development) were not met. Member timesheets have a built-in delineation of time in service in OnCorps. Member training and support is generally compliant. One challenge that some of the members have is with FEMA and other emergency management training, the program directors state this is due to language barriers. VM staff have tried to get them to teach the course on NIMS to try to eliminate the language barrier. This is still an issue that is being looked at, though it has been improved by having supervisors administer the NIMS course.

» Program Finances and Agency Fiscal Issues

Fiscal program staff are timely and very responsive for any requests for documents or verification of financial data. There have been no outstanding issues.

Community Awareness:

» Recognition in the public has come by way of one notable member. There is not a lot of press and their overall AmeriCorps branding needs work.

» The program updated its name but did not include "AmeriCorps" in the name as directed by the rules.

» Learning Works has impressive virtual presence within their AmeriCorps program but not a large external footprint.

Other comments:

» The budget narrative in the continuation application and the budget in the executive summary do not match.

» The budget has decreased CNCS share by \$4,254 and the Grantee Share proposed has increased by \$3,035. No other significant changes to report.

» Program staff collaborated with the Data Innovation Project to develop stronger data instruments for the next grant cycle. School partner support remains high for their program.

Task Force Review Summary:

Task Force Continuation Recommendation	Authorize Proposal	Modify: Increase	Modify: Decrease	Deny Request
Budget	X			
AmeriCorps MSYs and slots	X			
Performance targets	X			
Operating plans	X			

Comments:

- The program met it's targets for schools improving volunteer management practices. I'm not clear as to how successful it has been attracting volunteers. If the youth/mentor match target is based on volunteer mentors, that target fell significantly short.
- Lowering the 300 hour and 900 hour volunteer slots should be more reasonable for recruitment.
- these changes are a great idea and are good sign of an organization learning from experience and improving their processes.
- Mentor, volunteer, and member development performance targets that fell short last grant should be assessed with goal of meeting targets.
- AmeriCorps branding and visibility in the community needs to be improved.
- Including AmeriCorps in program name as directed needs to be addressed.